

MINUTES

(Subject to approval by the Task Force)

Early Childhood Development Task Force

Capitol Annex
West Conference Room 117
514 West Jefferson Street
November 30, 2007

Members present were Senator Gary Schroeder, Senator Tim Corder and Senator Mike Burkett. Chairman Senator Tom Gannon, Senator Stan Bastian and Senator Mel Richardson were absent and excused. Ad hoc members present were Mrs. Becky Young; Pat Collins, Hawley Troxell Ennis & Hawley LLP; and Stan Burton, Executive Director of Idaho Head Start.

Other persons present were Stephanie Bailey-White, Idaho Commission for Libraries; Wayne Davis, Mountain View School District 244, Grangeville Rural Schools; Byron Johnson, Idaho Voices for Children; Connie Davis, Parents as Teachers; Roger Sherman, Idaho Children's Trust Fund; Rob Winslow, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Mary Lou Kinney representing Idaho AEYC; Larry Koomler, Idaho Business Coalition for Education Excellence (IBCEE); Fairy Hitchcock, private citizen; Karen Echeverria, Wendy Horman and Patty Silvers, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA); Luci Willits, State Department of Education; Nicole Sirak, Family Advocate Program; Sherri Wood, Becky Paslay, Janet-Lee Murphy, Phyllis Garner, and Chris Joslyn, Idaho Education Association (IEA); Heath Druzin, Idaho Statesman; and Pat Stephens, Family Advocate Program (FAP). Staff present were Paige Alan Parker and Charmi Arregui, Legislative Services Office.

The meeting was called to order by **Senator Shroeder** at 9:10 a.m., who announced that **Senator Gannon** had asked him to chair the meeting in **Senator Gannon's** absence. **Senator Schroeder** expressed hope that by meeting's end this Task Force would have some ideas on what they want to do with regard to early childhood education.

Senator Corder moved that the minutes from the September 20, 2007 meeting be approved, seconded by Senator Burkett, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The first speaker was **Larry Koomler**, representing the Idaho Business Coalition for Education Excellence (IBCEE) as a volunteer, who works for Payne Financial Insurance Group. He said that IBCEE is a statewide, non-profit coalition of about 75 former CEO's and Presidents of Idaho business groups that formed in 2005, to drive positive changes in education by working with key stakeholders. IBCEE's focus is on quality education at all levels. IBCEE believes that early childhood education is critical, emphasizing the significant return on investment in early childhood education. **Mr. Koomler** cited information received from **Rob Gruenwald** of the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis that indicates that, based on research, the return on investment

from early childhood education ranges from a low of five to one, to a high of 17 to one. **Mr. Koomler** also pointed out that when dollars are *not* invested in early childhood education, problems arise after high school and long-term. He said that 60% of children under six years of age (63,000 children) live in families where the sole parent or both parents work, and thus are being cared for by those other than their parents. He questioned what resources are currently being provided to these families, adding that Head Start is currently receiving no state funding. If the statistics are correct, and if the return on investment in early childhood education is so high, he asked whether it made sense to invest additional support resources. IBCEE feels very strongly that it does.

Mr. Koomler expressed surprise that legislation last session did not go further than to lower the Idaho legal school age from five to four years of age. From his perspective, that legislation was simply to allow school districts to voluntarily open their facilities to early childhood education programs without additional funding from the Legislature. **Mr. Koomler** believes that such legislation does not result in the state taking over the responsibility for early childhood education, emphasizing that the parents will always be the critical factor in their children's education. He expressed concern about single parents who do not have the resources to provide an effective early childhood education and that IBCEE will continue to address this issue. As part of the business community, IBCEE has a vested interest in the education of all Idaho children and adults and wants to make sure that early childhood education remains on the agenda.

Senator Corder asked if **Mr. Koomler** could provide this Task Force with data he quoted on return on investment and how the data could be proven. **Mr. Koomler** referred to the Perry Study (The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: High/Scope Press, November 2004) and several others, and offered to provide more information after this meeting.

Senator Burkett asked if IBCEE had explored where to find additional resources to invest in prekindergarten, and commented that he was a sponsor of the bill proposed by IBCEE which made it through the Senate and not the House. Legislators who voted against that bill asked where the moneys needed to fund the bill would come. **Senator Burkett** noted that if the school districts are allowed to offer prekindergarten without additional resources, by definition the dollars spent on four-year-olds would come from dollars for older children. He encouraged the Task Force to make funding an agenda topic for its next meeting. **Mr. Koomler** agreed that finding additional funding sources is always difficult, but emphasized that IBCEE believes that more collaboration between interested parties and accessing more physical space within school districts, rather than actual dollars, would be a good beginning. He believes that when that collaboration occurs, funding sources would also be discussed. He believes that the first step should be to use the resources already available.

Senator Schroeder said that one possible solution might be to emphasize how much money will be *saved* by investing in prekindergarten programs for the long term in, for example, the criminal justice system. He suggested that perhaps the emphasis should become *money savings*, and wondered if voters in school districts could decide whether they wanted prekindergarten through a levy process. He added that he was pretty sure that his district would pass such a levy and

choose to publicly fund prekindergarten with local funds, not general funds.

Ad hoc member, **Pat Collins**, disclosed that he was a member of IBCEE. **Mr. Collins** suggested that more study should be done on the studies discussed by **Mr. Gruenwald**. **Senator Schroeder** asked **Mr. Collins**' opinion as to why prekindergarten had not been able to be passed in both the House and Senate. **Mr. Collins** shared that there is a strong contingent that thinks early childhood education is solely the responsibility of families. He emphasized that the role of the family is critically important; this is not an either/or situation. However, there are some families that simply do not have the resources or are incapable, for whatever reason, to provide optimal parenting. He believes that some of the children in such families become high-risk individuals and that dollars spent on prekindergarten will provide a return on the investment in the long term. **Mr. Collins** said that while it may not be the responsibility of the state to provide prekindergarten, the question is: "Do we abandon those 63,000 children?"

Senator Schoeder said that his perception is that the conservative minority has been able to carry enough other people with them to stop prekindergarten and he challenged the IBCEE's seventy-five executives to talk regularly to legislators.

Senator Corder stated that the key is not to look at this as an either/or situation, but rather as a "both" situation. This is the piece that has not been accepted by those in opposition to prekindergarten. He emphasized that there are parents who are incapable of providing adequate prekindergarten education to their children, adding that those are the precise children that need to be reached. The intent is not to remove children from homes where parents are providing early childhood education to their children.

Ad hoc member **Stan Burton**, Executive Director, Idaho Head Start Program, said that another segment of parents who might be reached by prekindergarten are those who want to improve their parenting skills. He suggested that this a matter of alternatives for giving parents options. Head Start is a transition program to help parents who don't have the skills or cultural or socio-economic background to manage their families more effectively. **Mr. Burton** said that an investment in Head Start is not a lifetime process, but rather one of helping people set and reach goals, so they won't need as much help.

Senator Burkett challenged the Task Force to look into another area: the prospect of kindergarten remediation. **Senator Burkett** wondered what the outcome might be if children who were not ready for kindergarten were identified and given intense preparation. **Senator Burkett** suggested that IBCEE might focus on this specifically, not as a substitute for prekindergarten, but rather as an area to study further. **Senator Burkett** would like to see state money spent where that money gets its best return and suggested that IBCEE look into various funding proposals. **Senator Schroeder** added that it is clear to him from research, that an investment in early childhood education would be money well spent.

Wendy Horman, past President, Idaho School Boards Association, spoke next. The Association consists of about 550 members. The Association votes to give resolutions that are presented to it

a do-pass or a do-not-pass recommendation; those that do pass become the Association's legislative agenda for the upcoming session. **Ms. Horman** said she did not have a copy of a resolution calling for a full-day kindergarten for the Task Force. The 2007 full daycare kindergarten resolution was similar to the one presented by the Blaine County School Board in 2006 which failed to pass the Association's membership by a two-to-one margin. The result this year was the same. She noted that confusion resulted from the 2006 resolution's use of the words "voluntary" and "all." The 2007 resolution deleted the word "all" and requested that districts have the ability to use discretionary funds to fund quality, voluntary programs for four-year-olds. But the 2007 resolution also failed. **Ms. Horman** shared reasons members gave in voting against the 2007 resolution. **Patty Silvers**, the author of the resolution, was present to cover the reason given by those supporting the resolution, a copy of which is available in the Legislative Services Office. **Senator Schroeder** requested a written copy of the comments both pro and con, and **Ms. Horman** agreed to provide that to the Task Force.

Ms. Horman asked the Task Force to keep in mind that she was simply reporting on comments made by trustees. While the proponents contend that those opposing voluntary early childhood education are violating both common sense and good research, those in opposition believe there is both common sense and research supporting the view that institutionalized preschool at an age *earlier than five* not only fails to produce long-term gains but, in some cases, is harmful and counterproductive. **Ms. Horman** said that academic test scores are not the only measures used in education to measure success, especially if a four-year-old is trying to figure out how to hold a crayon or go to the restroom on his own. Measures for social skills and emotional development must also be used. The November 2005 study conducted by the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University involving 14,000 U.S. preschool children found that the social skills of white middle-class children suffer in terms of cooperation, sharing and engagement in classroom tasks after attending preschool centers for *more than six hours daily* compared to similar children who remain at home with a parent prior to starting school.

Ms. Horman did add that she and **Ms. Silvers** believe that it is the parents' responsibility and right to choose at what point they will institutionalize any portion of the care or education of their children.

Ms. Horman said that the next most common objection to preschool for four-year-olds related to funding. In Idaho, there were 20,927 kindergartners in Idaho during the 2006-2007 school year; assuming that the number of four-year-olds is similar, the potential fiscal impact to the state could be substantial (\$200 to \$300 million based on an estimated of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per child and approximately 21,000 children). The feeling was that this money could be better spent on existing or innovative grades kindergarten through 12 programs. **Mr. Burton** commented that those figures seemed extraordinarily high. **Ms. Horman** cautioned that raising taxes to the point where families who choose to get by on one income are forced from the home into the workplace may create more problems. Six risk factors were identified by school board members: (1) poverty, (2) welfare dependence, (3) absent parents, (4) one-parent families, (5) unwed mothers, and (6) a parent without a high school diploma. She said that one trustee believed that programs for at-risk children should be run through the Health & Welfare budget and not the Department of

Education.

Ms. Horman concluded by adding that there are many successful programs operating in Idaho for four-year-olds who are at-risk children. Admittedly, they are expensive, but they truly do help children in desperate need of assistance. **Ms. Horman** knows on a first-hand basis that there truly are children in need of assistance and whose families are in no position to help them. She said the questions from the Association's membership seemed to center around whether it should be the role of government to provide and fund early childhood education experiences for young children.

Mr. Burton asked if the Idaho School Board Association was in favor of funding for Head Start.

Ms. Horman said she could not answer that question, adding that it would be interesting to see what would happen to a resolution coming through the Association that directed resources to at-risk children.

Senator Corder asked **Ms. Horman** about her comments, "children are born to their mothers," and determining which are "capable" and which mothers are not. **Ms. Horman** stated that her comments were personal, adding that in certain segments of our population, a sad statistic is that approximately 50% of children will never see their father in that child's lifetime. **Senator Corder** again asked how to determine "if they are capable" of making that decision. **Ms. Horman** said that certainly there are circumstances where drugs are involved and legal custody of a child is relinquished by the parent to the government as one example of a situation where the parent is *not* capable. **Senator Corder** said this may be part of the fear of early childhood education, the fear of the state institutionalizing the determination of who is capable.

Senator Burkett said he liked **Ms. Horman's** six at-risk factors for children; he reiterated that there are already prekindergarten programs in the state and there would be more if additional funding was available. He asked if the Association's members support what is happening right now in the schools and whether they would support supplementing these programs to make sure quality components are a part. **Ms. Horman** assumed there is support, but, unfortunately, she could not speak for the Association, since that was not part of its discussion. She added that she could invite the Association's members to express their opinions directly to the Task Force.

Senator Burkett asked **Ms. Horman** to express her own feelings on that question, and to assume that the cost would be about \$2,000 to \$3,000 per child, with the focus on at-risk children, the program would be provided at currently established facilities, and the state would only add the "quality component." **Ms. Horman** answered that, from her personal standpoint and not speaking for the Association, she would have no opposition to focusing resources on children and their families who need that assistance, adding that Parents as Teachers operates very successfully. **Ms. Horman** said that **Tim Hill** has stated that cost for educating a kindergartner in Idaho is approximately \$2,250 per child for half-day kindergarten.

Senator Burkett commented that the Berkeley study was based on white, middle-class kids where Mom takes care of the child at home versus where both parents work and kids are in a daycare environment, and found that those children in daycare were not doing as well as white, middle-class kids who stayed at home with Mom. He asked whether **Ms. Horman** was willing to

admit there would be a difference in the result where those two groups were compared versus a Chicago prekindergarten study which had at-risk kids in a facility only watching TV versus an at-risk child in a quality prekindergarten program, where one would more likely see a real return on the investment. **Ms. Horman** said she believed the Berkeley study did include all children, but added that the eye-opening part was the impact on the white, middle-class student. **Ms. Horman** suggested that the Task Force look at other studies, other than the Perry Study which involved only African-American children who got kicked out of the study if they had a parent go to work; she believes there are more solid studies done on return on investment.

Senator Schroeder believes that in the last several years Idaho has failed with its education efforts as indicated by the dropout rate and the declining number of students going on to college. (Idaho is now in the lower five states in the entire U.S.) Idaho's solution is to add more tests and to throw more math and science at students, while not addressing the real problem – the foundation. **Ms. Horman** said that **Senator Schroeder** was not wrong. She said she believed that her Association's membership would argue to fix the foundation at the kindergarten level and not the four-year-old level, as well as the foundational problems that exist clear up through grade 12, agreeing that the answer was not more testing.

Senator Schroeder commented on Idaho criminal justice system estimates of what cost savings might result or could be expected to be realized if an investment were made in quality early childhood education. **Senator Schroeder** expressed frustration with the skyrocketing criminal justice system costs and the lack of investment in foundational issues that could produce possible cost savings.

Mr. Collins agreed that he also felt frustrated listening to testimony in several meetings about the disparity between studies cited and the apparent outcomes. He asked if the Idaho School Board Association had discussed these apparently disparate, conflicting outcomes. **Ms. Horman** answered there was no discussion on this, adding that comments had been made about not wanting to get into a research duel. She had observed that research showing gains in at-risk populations appears to be quite solid if not long-term, adding that it would be difficult to demonstrate long-term, permanent improvement, even in at-risk populations.

Senator Burkett referred to the Association's Resolution No. 4, stating that children who attended state-funded preschools showed a 31% gain in vocabulary, 44% gain in early childhood education math skills, and an 85% gain in print awareness over one year, compared to children without the benefit of such programs. **Senator Burkett** said that he sits on the Governor's Criminal Justice Commission and the statistic they focus on, not on the Association's list, is cognitive development including social, emotional and relationship consciousness in young children. He wondered if the Association recognizes this type of positive development that prekindergarten and kindergarten intervention could facilitate. **Ms. Horman** said there was no specific discussion on this topic, adding that **Ms. Silvers** would address this in the next presentation. **Ms. Horman** concluded by saying that she knows that third grade is the deadline where that change happens from learning to read, to reading to learn; if a student has not succeeded by third grade, she believes that there will be criminal justice consequences.

Patty Silvers, Executive Board Member of Idaho School Board Association, began by stating that she was the author of Resolution No. 4 and also the resolution to fund full-day kindergarten. **Ms. Silvers** has expertise in education, having taught for 33 years, including at an alternative high school, having served on an advisory board for a state detention center program that starts with babies, and having taught parenting classes for 33 years and early childhood education classes for 16 years. Her belief is that parents should have the final say for their children, having the responsibility to teach, love and care for their children, and that children should stay at home until their parents believe that the child is ready for school, at which time the parents and the school should form a team for that child's education.

Ms. Silvers read Resolution No. 4 detailing the many benefits of "Voluntary, Quality Preschool Opportunity for Four-Year-Olds in Idaho," a copy of which is available in the Legislative Services Office. She feels very strongly that we need to fix what's happening to early childhood education, expressing hope that pending congressional legislation might help. She believes that what happens in early childhood affects the world, adding that she wants quality preschool and daycare centers, but they should not take the place of the family. She challenged Idaho to be a trendsetter, offering parents who need full-time daycare centers a preschool component taught by highly qualified teachers, not simply custodial care. She suggested that we brainstorm on how a family preschool might work, including involving parents on an active basis, setting goals, outcomes and activities for both parents and children, communicating with other parents and children in group settings, and making it fun and meaningful for all involved. She suggested that school districts might partner with churches, city officials and IDLA utilizing existing programs and employing positive marketing strategies to convince parents to participate. She added that it may not be as costly as suggested. The biggest problem she sees is that parents feel threatened. She ended by sharing her hope that parents and families be assisted in achieving their dreams for their children.

Senator Schroeder asked about integrating daycare centers with quality early childhood education, asking if **Ms. Silvers** would support stronger regulations for daycare centers to include ensuring children's safety from pedophiles. **Ms. Silvers** answered "yes."

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna spoke next, saying that early childhood education is an important part of the discussion. His focus is on preparing those students graduating from high school for the 21st century that awaits them. He knows we can do better. We have to do better since there are too many students not pursuing college educations and many students who do go on to college are in need of remediation. **Superintendent Luna** finds it interesting that colleges and universities say that high schools need to better prepare students; high schools say that the problem lies with the middle schools; the middle schools blame the elementary schools; and now the finger is being pointed down to prekindergarten, adding that this blame game needs to cease. We all need to take the responsibility to teach every child who shows up, with individualized strategies and the ability to offer a program that hopefully meets every child's needs based on their abilities. He thinks that one indicator is the Idaho Reading Index (IRI). Eighty percent of children are at grade level at the end of kindergarten on the IRI. That tells him that, for the most part, most children show up for kindergarten prepared to learn to read.

However, by the end of third grade only 62% are meeting the IRI proficiency level. Therefore, he is focusing on grades kindergarten to third. He invited further discussion, emphasizing the need for more resources for grades kindergarten through 12. **Superintendent Luna** wondered how we can expand the population we are trying to serve when there are not enough resources for those students we are currently trying to serve.

Superintendent Luna reiterated that the state is currently spending money on early childhood education for about 3,900 special education students between the ages of three to five years, at a cost of \$8.9 million, with only \$2.15 million of that sum coming from federal funds and the remainder coming from state funds. He said the federal IDEA preschool funds have been flat for the past six to eight years, accounting for only about 25% of the special education funding in Idaho. The 21st Century Community Learning Grants, part of safe and drug-free programs under Title IV-B, allow after-school programs to implement a preschool element. Of the 33 grantees under that program, only the Grangeville School District has chosen to spend its funds on a preschool program for at-risk students, this year receiving about \$175,000 which is allocated to support the District's six after-school program sites and prekindergarten programs.

Other programs such as Even-Start, part of the No Child Left Behind Program and similar to the Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program, identifies families that are in need of help in preparing their children for the public school setting. **Superintendent Luna** said there are five districts that receive funding ranging from \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually for their Even-Start Programs. Under Title I-A, there are two ways that districts can receive money: a formula grant and a competitive bid grant. Idaho is required to set aside four percent of its Title I-A allocation for school competitive improvement grants. Last year, some schools used these grant funds for at-risk preschool students. He said that 20 school districts in Idaho fund early childhood education with Title I-A funds, including the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind and others.

Superintendent Luna concluded by saying that we all want students to show up at kindergarten ready to learn. The best place to learn those skills is in the home. The focus should be on programs such as Parents As Teachers which targets those homes where parents do not have the skills to prepare their children for kindergarten. He suggested that the state seek restoration of federal funding for the PAT Program and possibly look at funding the PAT Program with state moneys through the Department of Health and Welfare.

Senator Schroeder said that he has an idea for a bill that would allow school districts to put prekindergarten before the voters for funding through a local levy, and asked **Superintendent Luna** if he would support that concept of local control. **Superintendent Luna** said that he did not have an opinion on that, although he is a fan of local control.

Senator Burkett asked whether the IRI 80% level was for May, 2006, or September, 2007. **Superintendent Luna** answered that in 2007, 80% of students at the end of kindergarten were reading at grade level on the IRI. In 2000 it was 46%. A significant increase has been made since 2004, up to 82% by 2006, which has now flattened off. He thinks the children are prepared to learn what is being taught and are reaching that goal by the end of kindergarten.

Senator Burkett said that the impression is that kindergarten teachers are doing a great job with reading, perhaps due to IRI goals set state-wide, but these same teachers are now concerned that this reading improvement is coming at the cost of pre-math skills and social skill development that historically has been a kindergarten function. Senator Burkett also commented that the focus should be on the prekindergarten ages of four to five years, which is the concern of the criminal justice system, rather than addressing the consequences of poor development at ages 16 to 26 years. **Superintendent Luna** said he had not heard that specific concern from kindergarten teachers about the IRI, but he is aware that more math initiatives need to be instituted. The Legislature will be hearing more about that in January. He hopes to see the same progress in math as has been seen in the reading initiative, agreeing that there needs to be balance and that it is difficult to catch up after the third grade.

Senator Burkett asked about the social, emotional and functional development focus of prekindergarten, stating that there are people in the educational field who believe that the lack of these noncognitive skills is the key to why there is a decline around third grade. **Superintendent Luna** responded that this area is difficult to assess. He has no problem in looking at best practices that focus on those non-cognitive skill areas, adding that he is in favor of making decisions based on data. **Superintendent Luna** believes that most children show up at kindergarten ready to learn, demonstrated by the 80% scores on the IRI. **Senator Burkett** noted that the IRI is given at the beginning, middle and end of kindergarten and asked what the score was at the beginning. **Superintendent Luna** did not have that figure but said that he could get that to the Task Force. An audience member stated that the fall percentage was about 75% and in the spring 80%.

Senator Schroeder commented: "We all understand that we can make tests that everybody passes or everybody fails, so whether we have the right test is the question." He added that socio-economic status of the family is also important with regard to the future of a child as research shows. **Superintendent Luna** said that there are many examples of schools with very difficult demographics that are hitting IRI or ISAT scores out of the ballpark. **Senator Schroeder** recalled that **Superintendent Luna** said he was data driven, and asked if **Superintendent Luna** was also research driven. **Superintendent Luna** answered, "sure."

Senator Corder commented that if there are two factions with opposing beliefs, both factions would argue that the same data supports its positions. **Senator Corder** thinks this applies to the IRI data that shows that students begin to fall behind in reading after the third grade. To him, this indicates that we are falling behind in the early childhood education social component. If the social component was focused upon, he believes that the success may be greater after third grade, although it may not be seen on the cognitive test scores. **Superintendent Luna** responded by saying that he did not come to provide evidence proving anyone right or wrong, but he thinks it must be part of the discussion. Accurate data must be driven by research.

Senator Corder said from what he was hearing, **Superintendent Luna** was not interested in efforts to expand early childhood education. **Senator Corder** wanted to hear **Superintendent Luna** say that he was interested in listening attentively and at least consider, and not summarily

dismiss, any recommendation made by the Task Force. **Superintendent Luna** answered that he would never dismiss summarily any information without review. However, he has made it very clear that he wants to strengthen the family and that he would prefer to focus resources into the home using the PAT program as an example of effectiveness.

Senator Corder asked if **Superintendent Luna** would concede that we can do both at the same time. **Superintendent Luna** said that many things could be done at the same time, but perhaps too many things are being done at the same time in education without evaluating effectiveness and focusing resources. **Superintendent Luna** said he would absolutely consider the Task Force's recommendations, adding that he would be happy to meet again with the Task Force to find the best way to move forward.

Senator Corder asked whether enough emphasis was being placed on vocational-technical postsecondary education where careers earning good money can be acquired rather than emphasizing college at a young age which may lead to frustration for children who do not have the skills to attend college. **Superintendent Luna** said that postsecondary education means more than college and that 80% of jobs, including sheet metal or welding, require some kind of postsecondary education. He added that 40% to 50% of students who attend college must take remedial courses, so all students must acquire the skills needed after high school.

Senator Schroeder commented that when the university presidents testified before the Senate Education Committee last year, their complaints about remediation ceased once the question of who should be paying for the remediation was raised. That discussion needs to take place.

Senator Schroeder believes that remediation is a landmine because so many students go back to college after years away and, of course, they need refresher courses. **Superintendent Luna** answered that at BSU this year, there are 100 remedial courses being taught and that most of those students attending BSU graduated from high school two to three years previously.

Mr. Burton asked **Superintendent Luna's** opinion about Head Start's total, comprehensive approach, focusing on parenting, job training skills and nutrition. **Superintendent Luna** said that Head Start offers real value, but with the amount of resources spent per child, it is always healthy to look at how resources are spent. Both Head Start and PAT need to go through that kind of evaluation.

Senator Schroeder thanked **Superintendent Luna** for his presentation.

Senator Schroeder commented that there needs to be more focus on vocational-technical opportunities. But research also shows that a certain number of children need to go to college to sustain standards of living.

Senator Burkett said he is a great fan of the PAT program, but that it is not necessarily directed to the at-risk homes, since it is based on voluntary participation, adding that PAT alone may not reach the at-risk homes that most need help with their children. He also added that special education programs cost approximately \$2,300 per child and that **Superintendent Luna** appeared

to be in favor of such programs.

Senator Schroeder commented that everyone needs to deal with the reality of the family structure *as it is today* and not as the family was back in 1950.

Dr. Wayne Davis, President, Idaho Rural Schools Association, was the next speaker. The number of kindergartners in his Mountain View School District has been consistently around 82. Out of that 82, eight come from single-parent families, 67 from dual-parent families, and seven from blended families. The percentage of children coming from single-parent families accelerates rapidly by the third or fourth grade. **Dr. Davis** is excited about prekindergarten but expressed concern about the additional cost of prekindergarten education coming out of his district budget. **Dr. Davis** is interested in giving communities the opportunity to levy for prekindergarten.

Dr. Davis has students who ride the bus two to three hours a day, two to three times a week to attend kindergarten, which creates many problems for continuity. This transportation issue needs to be addressed in the prekindergarten context. He wondered how to make students care more and to have their parents care more about the value of education, which he believes should begin early in the home.

Senator Schroeder asked what message **Dr. Davis** would give to those opponents of voluntary prekindergarten. **Dr. Davis** said he would invite all parents to be aware of situations such as a first grader in his district whose feet were severely burned from living in a home where meth was being produced. **Dr. Davis** believes that the social problems should be addressed first which, in his opinion, are the most important component of prekindergarten. **Dr. Davis** does believe that it *is* the parents' responsibility, but in some instances *they are not accepting this responsibility*. The value of keeping children in school and out of the criminal justice system starts with prekindergarten. He added that Elk City has used the 21st Century Grant to support prekindergarten.

Senator Schroeder said that early childhood education has been studied in Idaho since 1996, that research, both then and now, shows that prekindergarten is a good thing, but that this issue is being held up by "I believe" arguments, rather than what the research shows. **Dr. Davis** said that many decisions that are made are not data-driven, but rather emotionally-driven decisions, so passing a levy could be difficult.

Mr. Burton wondered if data makes any difference to opponents of early childhood education; since their fears are based on ideology. He firmly believes that legislators will only be convinced by parents asking for help to do a better job as parents and expressing their need for help and not for protection.

Senator Corder commented that only one out of 33 districts had chosen to spend their 21st Century money on prekindergarten, a fact which **Superintendent Luna** appears to take as a qualitative assessment. **Senator Corder** suggested that the Legislature may support early intervention counselors when children are at prekindergarten to address social problems.

Senator Schroeder stated that some school districts will not let their superintendents talk with legislators about education issues. He opined that if the superintendents and the districts don't stand up, they won't get the resources for their students.

Dr. Davis said that his district hires private preschools for early childhood education and pays an aide to serve those kids on a town-to-town rotation basis. Children served through special education in Idaho number 3,900; there are currently about 21,000 eligible children for prekindergarten education. **Dr. Davis** wondered if there is anything that could be learned from the special education programs that are currently operating in Idaho. As an educator, **Dr. Davis** said that the current special early childhood education in rural areas is not what he would like to see. He would like to see a teacher who had certification in early childhood development with knowledge of learning styles and social skills with families. Health and Welfare and Head Start are good sources for help, but most private agencies do not have access to that expertise. **Senator Schroeder** added that there are many prekindergarten programs operating currently and some are funded with general funds. Some educators do not know this is not legitimate, so part of trying to pass legislation is to make legal what is already going on.

Senator Burkett expressed interest in the way **Dr. Davis'** district was handling the IDEA preschool program with services being delivered at an existing daycare center or preschool center where the kids are already in attendance. He asked if the traveling teacher is certified. **Dr. Davis** said that the instructor who writes the program is certified, but the program may be presented by an aide.

Senator Burkett asked about the potential for using this program to address at-risk children who do not meet the IDEA cutoff. **Dr. Davis** said that this is the way the program works in Washington and is not limited to at-risk kids. **Senator Burkett** asked if the cost to deliver preschool in existing centers was more than \$2,310, the average across the state for prekindergarten. **Dr. Davis** responded that tuition is charged for children who attend which covers most of the cost, adding that there are some federal grant funds available to cover some of the children.

Senator Burkett pointed out that, in his opinion, prekindergarten in Idaho has legitimacy under (1) federal law and (2) a statute in Idaho that allows school districts to supplement grades kindergarten through 12 with such things as adult education. He believes that prekindergarten also supplements grades kindergarten through 12. **Senator Schroeder** said that if some schools are running preschools without any federal funding, then there could be a legitimacy problem. **Dr. Davis** agreed.

Senator Schroeder asked **Senator Burkett** whether he was interpreting existing statutes to allow school districts to run a levy to establish and fund prekindergarten programs from local funds and without having to change any state law. **Senator Burkett** said he didn't know about the levy or funding, clarifying that a change in the law is not needed to have four year-olds inside a school building. **Dr. Davis** stated that it was his understanding that unless there is federal funding, it can't be done. **Senator Schroeder** said that the **Attorney General** had been consulted through

communications, saying that may not be the case.

Senator Burkett wondered if **Superintendent Luna** could close down a program that had no federal overlay. **Senator Schroeder** emphasized that he likes explicit laws, citing a lawsuit in his district that threatens to cut off programs mid-school year based on the court's decision questioning the legitimacy of a levy override. When the Legislature is not specifically clear with language, court challenges may occur, resulting in an expensive mess. **Senator Schroeder** told the Task Force that legislative intent is based on statements made at committee meetings, sometimes with no official record. **Senator Schroeder** said that he knew what was intended in Moscow, based on the discussion, but there is no record of that intent.

Dr. Davis said that transportation for preschool is a big issue, especially in rural communities. **Senator Schroeder** asked if local patrons would support local funding to continue preschool if federal funding ran out. **Dr. Davis** said frankly, he couldn't say. He said that Idaho County is one of the four poorest counties in Idaho based on per capita income and unemployment; the patrons don't have much money. **Senator Schroeder** understood that per capita income and market values are skewed greatly in the state. His proposal would allow those people who want and can afford to provide prekindergarten for their districts to do so. **Dr. Davis** agreed that they should be allowed to do that.

Senator Burkett asked if the IDEA model used in **Dr. Davis'** district, where the certified instructor travels to the children located at centers, would alleviate the transportation issue. **Dr. Davis** said "yes," but stated that the model has not been expanded from private preschools attended by children whose parents can afford the tuition to the total population that needs these services.

Sherri Wood, President, Idaho Education Association, was the next speaker. **Ms. Wood** has taught for 28 years, mostly in special education. She said that many children find themselves overwhelmed upon entering kindergarten and would benefit greatly from a well-designed prekindergarten program. She said teachers across the nation are concerned about children entering kindergarten already behind their peers. She said that teachers know that a full-day, full-year kindergarten and part-day prekindergarten of 2 3/4 hours of the highest quality are the best way to prepare students for a formal education. A copy of **Ms. Wood's** presentation is available in the Legislative Services Office. She cited studies which view education as an investment, not an expense, with the greatest long-term benefits for children and society coming from early childhood development programs. **Ms. Wood** also handed out lists of observations by parents regarding what their child learned in preschool, a copy of which is also available in the Legislative Services Office.

Ms. Wood listed the components of a high-quality prekindergarten program identified by the National Education Association: (1) low class size; (2) parental involvement; (3) highly qualified staff; (4) curriculum; (5) assessment; and (6) a comprehensive service network to address children's health, nutrition and family. She said that Idaho ranks thirty-fifth, ahead of only 15 other states, in the quest to create quality prekindergarten experiences for children. Idaho is one

of only seven states that does not fund prekindergarten programs. **Ms. Woods** said that the IEA looks forward to strengthening the prekindergarten through 12th grade education system for the good of all.

Chris Joslin, Boise, has taught children from upper middle-class families in private schools, in preschool and kindergarten for 13 years. For the last ten years she has taught the early childhood special education program in the Boise School District. **Ms. Joslin** shared with the Task Force the contrast between the children in private school who come from homes of privilege and the diverse situations of those children who come from homes of poverty. Her special education program encompasses children with cancer and autism and children whose parents have not had a full education and where poverty is often a factor. These children all have potential, but due to their environment, already have a delay in their development. All of these children make incredible progress in the special education programs. She pointed out that some children's social skills are primitive. All of her students are from urban areas; she is very concerned about children from rural communities. She wished that special education was possible for every child in Idaho.

Becky Pasley, Boise, has taught the All-Ready Program at the Whittier school for three years, one of two such programs in Boise. Previously, **Ms. Pasley** taught kindergarten, second and fourth grades, giving her first-hand experience in witnessing what early childhood education can do for children. All-Ready preschool has a goal of providing an early intervention framework designed to give preschoolers and their parents support, with parental involvement being essential. She is very passionate about these children. When they don't have a strong foundation entering kindergarten, they enter already behind, which is reflected in testing scores. At-risk children who have had preschool have a strong advantage over those at-risk children who don't. She pointed out that many children come from homes where parents do not speak English, and in many cases are uneducated. She stressed that home experiences are vital to all children, but that children's home experiences need to be enhanced. She has seen that many of the children who have experienced preschool are better prepared for kindergarten. Students who have developmental delays can be identified in preschool and placed on individualized plans, leading to better success. **Ms. Pasley** has 22 students from eight different countries, 55% of whom speak English only as a second, third or fourth language.

Ms. Phyllis Garner, Meridian, has been a teacher for 25 years and a kindergarten teacher for nine years. She said that 69% of the students at Meridian Elementary are economically challenged. She has 42 children in her kindergarten class, only nine having attended preschool. Only 18 of those 42 children came to kindergarten prepared to use scissors; 12 were unable to write their name; and four students could only count to ten. Kindergarten has changed. Now, she teaches kindergartners what she used to teach children in first grade. Most students who have attended preschool come to kindergarten fully prepared to learn. Many children in her class have not been exposed to zoos, museums or parks. She visits homes where there are stay-at-home mothers, but that doesn't mean that the child is ready for kindergarten. There are no books or newspapers in many homes. She believes that preschool would give the economically challenged children an equal chance at success in kindergarten.

Janet-Lee Murphy, Boise, has been an early childhood educator for 32 years and has a Master's degree in early childhood development. She is currently assigned to an all-day, tuition-based kindergarten at Shadow Hills Elementary. Her background includes 15 years at Jefferson Elementary in Boise where 24 different languages were spoken. She has seen the curriculum shift from first grade to kindergarten and from kindergarten to preschool. She defined "preschool" as the form of education for young children which serves as a transition from home to the commencement of formal, mandatory schooling. Before focusing on traditional preschool and other childhood programs, **Ms. Murphy** opined that Idaho needs to do the next logical thing -- make kindergarten mandatory. The higher academic standards of today have resulted in an evolution of kindergarten into a rigorous academic environment which prepares children to succeed in later grades. **Ms. Murphy** said that we need to reexamine our investment in kindergarten and address issues like: funding full-day, rather than half-day, kindergarten; lowering the compulsory age to five years of age by September first; finding and retaining quality kindergarten teachers who use developmentally appropriate practices to meet these new academic goals; and developing appropriate assessments, like the Idaho Reading Indicator, to document progress and inform teachers. Finally, she said that Idaho should provide additional investment in the already existing public preschool education in order to provide all Idaho children with an equal opportunity to succeed.

Senator Corder asked how to encourage and get parental support. **Ms. Pasley** said that there is a user-friendly way to invite parents into classrooms where parents can become learners, even though at first apprehensive. **Senator Corder** commented that it would seem that there are many parents for whom an invitation would not work, and asked how we might make parental involvement happen. **Ms. Pasley** answered that teachers are being creative about how to involve families, including "learning together nights" at libraries with learning kits for family activities, which is achieving a high return, and Boys and Girls Club activities for learning in fun ways. Parental involvement does not always take place in the classroom, although that is the most powerful.

Ms. Murphy's Master's thesis was on parent involvement. She stated that there are two ways to get parents involved: (1) through home visits where you bond with your kindergartner and develop a relationship with the parent in a less intimidating environment; and (2) through inviting parents into the classroom. The goal is to explain to them in a fun, nonthreatening way how their child will be taught. There is a sign-up sheet for volunteering at the school which has received a tremendous response. This parent involvement is a huge component of both preschool and kindergarten.

Senator Schroeder asked if there were parents who did not want a teacher coming to their home. **Ms. Garner** answered that seldom has that occurred and, if it did, the meeting would be held at school.

Senator Corder asked **Ms. Garner** to put in writing her remarks about the lack of a successful outcome even when a parent is present in the home, since legislators keep hearing that keeping mothers at home is the solution to early childhood education.

Senator Corder said that opponents to early childhood education outside the home use the argument that if you make it voluntary now, it will later become mandatory, and if kindergarten becomes mandatory, the same would happen to prekindergarten. **Ms. Murphy** replied that the current system allows a parent to keep the kindergarten-age child at home based upon what the parent thinks is best for the child. But she would like to see some supervision on what is going on in the home settings, not unlike the guidelines for home-school families. She said that such guidelines would allow teachers to support parents, provide curriculum choices, give them total support and close loopholes that presently exist. She said that so much teaching time and resources in all grades are now being wasted on remediation.

Senator Burkett asked **Ms. Murphy** how many kids would show up if kindergarten was mandatory. **Ms. Murphy** said that 97% of Idaho's kindergarten-aged children are currently in some type of kindergarten program. **Ms. Murphy** said it was not equitable to hold kindergarten teachers accountable for reaching certain progress test score benchmarks and yet not require the children to attend kindergarten. She is most concerned about the three percent of children who are taking teaching time away from the first grade teachers and all the other students. **Senator Burkett** asked how many students in first grade don't show up for kindergarten in **Ms. Murphy's** school. She estimated about 20%. **Senator Burkett** asked about parent involvement for those at-risk students. **Ms. Pasley** said that parents involved in the early years stay involved, because teachers become less threatening after a positive, friendly exposure. This challenges teachers to become creative in involving parents.

Mr. Burton said he used to run three private schools where parent involvement was much easier. In Head Start, parents are 49% of the governance. In addition to getting parents comfortable, giving them ownership in the education of their child and keeping them involved is difficult in a public school setting. **Ms. Garner** said that teachers need to get parents involved in a meaningful way that shows the difference that the parents are making at school can be carried over to the home. This instills the love of learning in both parents and children which can be sustained throughout high school. **Mr. Burton** said he doesn't see any way that parents can really impact the kind of education their child gets year after year in the public school setting compared to the private schools and Head Start settings. **Ms. Garner** said that it comes down to the public school administrator and how he involves the entire community.

Senator Schroeder asked **Ms. Wood** how many schools don't welcome parental involvement because they fear "grippers." **Ms. Wood** answered "very few."

Senator Schroeder asked **Ms. Murphy** if she would put in written form for the Task Force a research project on the history of the attempt, starting in 1996, to put prekindergarten education in Idaho, identifying the impediments to prekindergarten.

Rob Winslow, Executive Director, Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA), told the Task Force that he was representing state school leaders at the district and building levels. He said the IASA supported early childhood education in its 2008 critical legislative issues document. A copy of that document is available in the Legislative Services Office. He said that

administrators encourage careful consideration of the educational advantages of quality early childhood experiences, including full-day kindergarten, focusing on identification of at-risk students. Full funding to implement these changes must accompany any change in statute.

Mr. Winslow shared various examples of successful early childhood education programs throughout Idaho. He cautioned that school administrators are very reluctant to keep expanding the mission of public education in this state, adding that their interest in providing quality early childhood programs is needs driven. He pointed out that expectations have been raised for all children in public school grades kindergarten through 12 and that many districts are currently working at providing additional educational experiences for young children. The most common additional educational experience is a full-day or extended kindergarten for qualified children. Children with below grade level abilities are reaching grade level proficiency with the additional kindergarten experience. **Mr. Winslow** said that preparation for kindergarten is critical for success in later grades. The Idaho School Superintendents' Association would like to prioritize funding support for a needs-based, full-day kindergarten before funding a preschool program. The issues of additional facilities and highly qualified teachers could be easier addressed for full-day kindergarten than for preschool. He said that perhaps districts could be given additional funding with the option of preschool or kindergarten on a needs basis. **Mr. Winslow** concluded that early childhood education is already being addressed by many districts, and any legislation that would provide additional funding would be highly supported by the members of IASA.

Mr. Burton asked specifically about the Parma School District. **Mr. Winslow** shared that Parma provides a developmental kindergarten program for students needing another year for readiness skills. **Mr. Burton** asked if that program was more cognitive or focused on socio-emotional, and **Mr. Winslow** answered that Parma focuses more on preparation for academic skills.

Senator Schroeder noticed that IASA seems very aware of Idaho law, asking if **Mr. Winslow** thought that a school district in this state could start a prekindergarten program in the public schools without federal funding for children four years of age and be in compliance with state law. **Mr. Winslow** thinks Idaho law is quite clear that public education begins at five years of age, adding that most school districts that have programs for children *under* the age of five (special education and preschool) do *not* believe they are in violation or are trying to circumvent state law. Instead, they are simply trying to respond to needs. He admitted it is a gray area and the bill that did not pass the House last year would have made things easier. **Senator Schroeder** asked how the IASA would view a bill allowing voters in a district to decide through a local levy if they want to fund local prekindergarten programs. **Mr. Winslow** said he thought IASA would be very supportive.

Senator Burkett handed out an outline entitled "2008 Early Childhood Education Legislative Agenda" and Draft Legislation DRPAP456, copies of which are available in the Legislative Services Office. He said that **Senator Gannon** and he had put together what a high quality, voluntary, community-based Idaho prekindergarten program would look like, recognizing the state's distinct financial limits and focusing on parental control and involvement. This proposed prekindergarten program, which has taken hold in other states, is premised on bringing quality

prekindergarten instruction to children in supervised environments for 7.5 weekly hours. In rural areas, the answer is not busing or long commutes but bringing the instructor to the venue. The state would be only providing the prekindergarten instructor, not the place or the lunch, with supervision or oversight by someone already in place. **Senator Burkett** said that the way **Dr. Davis** defined what is going on in the Grangeville School District defines how a community-based prekindergarten would operate. **Senator Burkett** emphasized that funding is not the big piece; prekindergarten for four year olds would cost about \$20 million, less than for a third-grade classroom, because this voluntary program would not have 100% participation and the lack of transportation costs. Communities would fund prekindergarten, using existing resources and grants to keep costs low.

Senator Burkett believes that the cost per child for prekindergarten, including a substantial reach into the community for at-risk children, would cost about \$2,500 per child. The State Board of Education would oversee these programs and issue grants based on criteria such as addressing risk factors and efficiently using funding resources. The grant model would allow the Legislature to put \$20 million into prekindergarten to be disbursed by the Board of Education on a priority basis. State funding would be limited to the cost of providing highly qualified early childhood educators. Once the Capitol renovation is complete in 2011, the \$20 million annual cost for prekindergarten in Idaho could be funded by funds being used for the Capitol restoration. **Senator Burkett** said DRPAP456 sets up ten pilot projects, using one-time funding, serving 200 children at a cost of \$2,500 per child.

Mr. Burton referred to the prekindergarten councils discussed on page three of the draft, wondering about possibly adding to the draft the fact that the Head Start community may have expertise which could be shared. **Senator Burkett** agreed that all community resources could be pooled. **Senator Corder** suggested that having an absent parent be added as a risk factor in the draft.

Senator Schroeder announced that the Task Force addressed all of the agenda items and invited discussion.

Senator Burkett said that he and **Senator Bastian** have been working on a concept called “shared reimbursement,” which has been implemented successfully in other states. There is \$33 million of federal money coming into Idaho right now for low-income family childcare. Other states have designed programs disbursing that money for early childhood education for children ages one through three, based on educational components. Supplemental funding, perhaps around \$5 million, would be required to establish a similar program in Idaho.

Senator Corder asked if it was premature for this Task Force to make any recommendations. **Senator Schroeder** confirmed that the agenda did not include making motions.

Senator Corder asked what strategy **Senator Burkett** had for DRPAP456. **Senator Burkett** replied that the draft is definitive, has a price tag, states its purpose, is well defined, and thus addresses part of the problem in past legislation which has not passed. It is a meaningful proposal

that will impact children. He believes that it neutralizes those who oppose doing something that is not funded or who see money being taken from other areas. **Senator Burkett** believes that remediation dollars would be much better spent on four-year-olds rather than on 12 year-olds. But, according to **Senator Burkett**, the better solution is to appropriate \$20 million to fund this pilot prekindergarten program.

Senator Corder liked the flexibility that DRPAP456 provides to communities, allowing them to make the determination as to where to assemble children who are to receive benefit of the highly qualified teacher.

Senator Schroeder commented that so many have addressed the potential for long-term returns on prekindergarten, especially with regard to the criminal justice system. He admitted, however, that he is a realist and doesn't think that Idaho will spend money for prekindergarten any time soon, noting that he has been a proponent of prekindergarten since 1996. **Senator Schroeder** has stated that he will have legislation drafted which will allow people to vote on a local levy to fund prekindergarten. His district, he believes, would support such a levy, as would many other communities.

Mr. Collins said that he believes that DRPAP456 and other ideas could perhaps be melded together. His continuing concern is getting any legislation heard in the House.

Senator Schroeder said that there may be many drafts introduced this year, so they must wait to get a sense of what is being proposed. This is where advocates come into play, emphasizing that the proponents of prekindergarten must get organized and involved and be very diplomatic in asking to be heard. **Senator Burkett** added that this is the time when the advocates for prekindergarten are going to have to get really involved.

Senator Corder said this could be a very good session to talk about local option taxes with the formation of the regional transportation facility which may be breaking the ice for local option taxes. He stated that people need to be convinced that over the long term, investing in prekindergarten is a *savings* rather than an expenditure.

Senator Schroeder cautioned that it may be important for the prekindergarten advocates to not put their eggs all in one basket and to gauge the possibilities as the session progresses.

Mr. Burton wondered if school districts could proceed locally. **Senator Corder** said that cities and counties are often told that they can do what they want, but the Legislature actually tells them what they can do. This is the way business is done.

Senator Schroeder said that most school law has no enforcement mechanism in place, as confirmed by the Attorney General's office. Even a definition for "school" cannot be agreed upon. According to **Senator Schroeder**, currently there are about 30 prekindergartens operating in Idaho.

Senator Burkett said the system works pretty well, in that school law follows funding and what is done is enforced by dollars. The system runs fairly adequately, unless laws are not followed, resulting in the loss of funding. **Senator Schroeder** added that state auditors do not audit school districts, but that the system would break down if there was widespread noncompliance. The courts are in place to handle dispute resolution.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m..